

# How to Choose Nutritious Cereals

Reading the nutrition label on cereal boxes enables you to choose a nutritious cereal.

Use the General Recommendations below to guide you.

## General Recommendations

### Whole Grains

Choose a cereal with the grains listed under ingredients as “whole” for whole wheat, whole bran, wheat bran, whole grain oats, etc. The word “wheat flour” almost always means “white flour” otherwise it would say “whole wheat flour”. If the label doesn’t specifically say the grain is “whole”, assume that it isn’t. The quality of the grain is more important than the percentage of vitamins listed on the box. Synthetic vitamins may be cheaper to add than nutritious grains.

### Sugar

Choose low sugar cereals with 6 grams or less of sugar. Sugar will be listed on a separate line under “Total Carbohydrate”. Many cereals on the market appear healthy when they’re loaded with sugar.

### Fiber

Choose fiber-rich cereals with 3 grams or more of fiber per serving. To determine the total carbohydrate content, subtract the grams of fiber from the grams of sugar. Look for cereals that contain high-fiber grains, such as barley, buckwheat, millet, oats, rye, and whole wheat.

### Fat

Choose low-fat cereals that contain 3 grams of fat or less per serving, with no saturated and no trans fat. Be wary of granola cereals because they may contain 4-9 grams of fat per serving.

### Sodium

Choose cereals that are lower in sodium; preferably with 200mg sodium or less per serving.

### Nutrient Density

Choose the more nutrient dense cereal (with the lower volume per serving). Compare the weight of a serving (in grams) in relation to the volume (i.e. ½ cup) to find the nutrient-density. The more volume needed in one cereal to match the same weight in grams of fiber, protein, and other nutrients of another cereal just results in a lot of expensive air.

### Fruit

It’s more nutritious to buy pure grains in the cereal and add your own fruit. Most cereals contain very little fruit. Dried fruit may be heavier than the grain. Therefore, it may be listed near the top of the ingredient list and may give the impression that there is a lot of fruit in the cereal.

### Ingredients to Avoid

Choose cereals without the following ingredients on the nutrition label:

- partially hydrogenated oils (also known as: trans fat)
- dyes / artificial colors (i.e. yellows 5&6, blue 1, red 40)
- chemical preservatives (i.e. BHT)

Helpful Tip: Look for cereals with fewer ingredients. Long ingredient lists tend to include many different additives. Flavored cereal usually means sugar has been added.